

Being Prepared for Eastern Montana Winters



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It's that time of year again when we start putting away the lawn mower and pulling out the snow blowers. Are you prepared for another season of winter?

Being prepared for winter is essential when living in Montana's extreme climate. While the record low in the state is 70 below at Rogers Pass, eastern Montana can easily plummet into the 30 to 40 below range, and stay there for a week. And while this region only averages two major winter storms a year, the winter of 2003-2004 really outdid itself with a total of 6 major winter storms that left much of the region under deep snow cover well into the spring.

Listen to the weather forecast daily. Local television and radio stations get warning messages from the National Weather Service, but sometimes they do not have staffing 24 hours a day, and so you may not get the most up to date information. There are times when forecasts are updated during the day by the National Weather Service to include a winter weather watch, warning or advisory, and the best way to get these updates is by listening to All-Hazards NOAA Weather Radio. These special built radios can be purchased at many locations across the region, and they play current and forecast weather information 24 hours a day, right from the National Weather Service offices that cover the region. There are All-Hazards NOAA Weather Radio transmitters at the following locations in eastern Montana: Glasgow, Malta, Scobey, Plentywood, Glendive, Poplar, Circle, Winnett, Jordan, Miles City, Baker, Havre and Lewistown. The NOAA Weather Radio transmitter 14 miles east of Williston, ND also covers areas in eastern Montana as well.

For your home, keep a battery powered radio and flashlight, along with extra batteries, **in a place you know your kids won't get to them at.** Keep extra groceries and gallon water jugs on hand. If you have infants or toddlers, do not let the diaper supply get too low. Have the flashlights and candles and matches available in case of a power outage. Have backup heat sources available so that you can at least keep one room in the house warm, i.e. wood stove, kerosene heaters etc. Prevent fire hazards from wood, coal or oil sources by having your chimney cleaned once a year. Keep fire extinguishers on hand. If snow begins accumulating on the roof, make sure to keep the heating vents cleared to keep carbon monoxide from poisoning you or your family. Be sure to dress appropriately when going outside, including wearing several layers of loose-fitting clothing. If you have a back-up generator, make sure that it is serviced and in good operating condition. Never bring the generator into your home, and do not open windows that are near the generator to let in fresh air, as the carbon monoxide exhaust can get pulled into your home.

When traveling, even a short distance during hazardous winter weather, make sure to let people know where you are going, and which route you are taking. Also, once you arrive, let them know you made it safely. To get the latest road reports free

from the Montana Department of Transportation, **dial 511**. This also works if you are traveling in North Dakota and call 511 with your cell phone there. Carrying a survival kit in your car may seem like a nuisance because of the amount of room it takes, but you won't regret having one if you are ever stranded. Items that are useful to carry in your car are: three pound coffee can which can be used as a water heater; matches and candles; flashlights with extra batteries; winter clothing including cap, mittens, heavy socks, gloves, and coveralls; first aid kit including any needed prescriptions; bottled water that is not totally full so that there is room for expansion; high energy food such as candy, nuts, raisins, and granola bars; small bag of kitty litter to use for traction; a shovel; basic tool kits such as a leatherman or swiss army knife; paper towels or toilet paper to use for designed purpose and also to help start a fire; tow chain or strap; spare tire; battery booster cables; and flares to use as a signaling device.

The State of Montana DOT and DES have put together an excellent resource guide to dealing with our Montana winters. It is called the **Montana Winter Survival Guide**, and you can access it at:

http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/brochures/winter_maint/winter_survival.pdf

The Number of Winter Storms That Have Impacted Each County Since 1996:

County	#Winter Storms, Blizzards and Ice Storms
Daniels	17
Dawson	14
Garfield	19
McCone	20
Petroleum	12
Phillips	19
Prairie	16
Richland	17
Roosevelt	19
Sheridan	18
Valley	21
Wibaux	14
Average per year for NE Mont	2